

RENAISSANCE®

Accelerated Reader & Star Reading

IN
FIFE

We spoke to Graeme Keir, an English teacher at Glenrothes High School in Fife, Scotland.



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Reading ages, pupil wellbeing and exam readiness: setting our pupils up for life

Glenrothes High School is a secondary school in Fife, Scotland, who have been using Accelerated Reader for three years.

From implementation to daily use

We implemented Accelerated Reader (AR) because we needed something to improve the students' focus if we found they weren't doing so well in reading and literacy in general. In addition, we wanted to have a better understanding of what pupils were actually reading and subsequently reward them for the reading they were doing. Several staff had used Star Reading in a previous school, so we decided to bring it in to Glenrothes High School.

We're very proactive with using AR and the corresponding Star Reading assessment: the teachers are using it every day. All pupils spend ten minutes at start of every English period to read and/or take Accelerated Reader quizzes: this encourages not only an emphasis on reading for pleasure daily, but also a motivation to read properly and take in the content of their texts.

We've placed a specific focus on making sure there's strong progress with reading throughout the whole school. We can see the big changes we're making to students' reading levels as they use the programme: in fact, we're seeing some extraordinary developments, such as four years of reading growth in a year, and or four and a half years in two years.

Space for reading

Whilst implementing AR, it became clear that our library stock was too advanced for the pupils' current level of ability. With Accelerated Reader, we're able to match books with each pupil's reading level. We've rearranged the library so pupils can choose books based on their preferred genre, and labelled the books so they can find one that is manageable or challenging, depending what they're after! But the changes to our library don't end with the books: infrastructural improvements, like new comfy chairs, make it a more attractive and approachable space, and encourage pupils to spend time reading in there. We also provide a reading café for pupils where they can sit and read in their own time.

Narrowing the attainment gap

As teachers, we see a lot of support and benefit from Star Reading too. We carry out a minimum of four Star Reading tests a year, and these are crucial to inform teachers of which pupils are a potential cause for concern, and those who may need extra support or even intervention to get their literacy progress back on track. The data and reports acquired from the Star Reading tests are clear and concise: they show our staff which pupils are not making enough or the predicted amount of progress in an efficient and easy-to-read way.

I can say with confidence that data from our Star Reading tests categorically illustrates that the attainment gap in literacy within our school is narrowing. Plus, because Star Reading offers standardised reading levels, we can share this invaluable data with parents to illustrate how their children are progressing, compared to their peers, on a national level. Then we can look at AR to identify which pupils are reading the most and which pupils are not engaging.

Last year we began using the parent portal, Home Connect. We sent letters home to parents telling them about Home Connect and

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giving them an introduction to AR. Following this, 10% of parents logged in – which we were really pleased about! – and now every year we're continuing to make parents aware of how much we're using AR.

A positive impact on wellbeing

We're increasingly conscious of the benefits that reading has on pupils' personal health and wellbeing. Reading allows them to focus on something in a quiet and calm environment for ten minutes, in what might otherwise be a very busy school day. I think taking this time to read is extremely important to young adults' mental health. If reading can fundamentally reduce stress for an age bracket of young adults that are notoriously susceptible to being mentally unwell, then it can only be a positive. This increased regularity of reading is something that we brought in with Accelerated Reader, and this beneficial element is not always one that is considered.

Lifelong impacts

We know how significant the impact on pupils' life chances can be when their reading improves. Going up to a reading age of 14-15 years and having the ability to read more sophisticated texts with fluency is obviously going to put pupils in better stead for exams and then subsequent lifelong learning.

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